

Isaiah 18:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For afore the harvest, when the bud is perfect, and the sour grape is ripening in the flower, he shall both cut off the sprigs with pruning hooks, and take away and cut down the branches.

Analysis

'For afore the harvest, when the bud is perfect, and the sour grape is ripening in the flower, he shall both cut off the sprigs with pruning hooks, and take away and cut down the branches.' Before harvest (before plans mature), God intervenes with pruning. The imagery depicts viticulture—cutting off promising growth before fruit matures. This describes God's judgment on Ethiopian/Egyptian anti-Assyrian plans: before diplomacy could produce results, God terminates the scheme. The pruning metaphor indicates not mere failure but divine intervention preventing success. This demonstrates God's sovereignty over human plans—'Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails' (Proverbs 19:21). God permits plans to develop only to the point serving His purposes, then cuts them off.

Historical Context

The pruning metaphor precisely describes what occurred: Ethiopian/Egyptian anti-Assyrian coalition-building was cut off before achieving goals. The 701 BCE campaign saw Assyria defeat Egyptian forces at Eltekeh, neutralizing Ethiopian military support before it could effectively aid Judah. Yet Jerusalem's deliverance came through direct divine intervention, not Ethiopian help. God pruned human plans while accomplishing His own purposes. This fulfilled Isaiah's consistent warnings against trusting Egypt/Ethiopia rather than God. Historically, Ethiopia's

influence in Levantine politics was permanently reduced after these failures, illustrating divine pruning's lasting effects.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. What does the pruning metaphor teach about God's sovereignty over human plans?
2. How does God's intervention before harvest demonstrate His perfect timing and control?
3. Why does God sometimes permit plans to develop before terminating them?

Interlinear Text

כִּי	לִפְנֵי י	קָצִיר	כְּתָם	כֶּרֶחַ	וּבִסֵּר
H3588	For afore	the harvest	is perfect	when the bud	and the sour grape
	H6440	H7105	H8552	H6525	H1155
גֹּמֵל	יְהוָה ה	נֶצַח ה	וְכָרַת	הַלְלִיזִים	
is ripening	H1961	in the flower	he shall both cut off	the sprigs	
H1580		H5328	H3772	H2150	
בַּמְזְמָר וְ	וְאֵת	הַנְּטִישׁ וְ	הִסִּיר	הִתְּזָ:	
with pruning hooks	H853	the branches	and take away	and cut down	
H4211		H5189	H5493	H8456	

Additional Cross-References

Song of Solomon 2:13: The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.

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